

## The Future...

LDWF and project partners will reintroduce a new cohort of birds each year for the next several years. Research and monitoring of released birds will be on-going and is an important aspect of this project. The continued progress towards our goal depends on you.

## Support the Louisiana Whooping Cranes!



LOUISIANA | WILDLIFE & FISHERIES | FOUNDATION

Success of this project is made possible through private and corporate donations. If you would like to support the Louisiana whooping crane project, by making a tax deductible donation, please contact Kell McInnis at the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation at (225) 765-5100 or [kmcinnis@wlf.la.gov](mailto:kmcinnis@wlf.la.gov) or visit the foundation's website at: <http://lawff.org>



"When you watch an adult Whooper stride close by you, his head high and proud, his bearing arrogant and imposing, you feel the presence of a strength and of a stubborn will to survive. We have a strong conviction that the whooping crane will keep his part of the bargain and will fight for survival every inch of the way. What are we going to do to help?"

*Robert P. Allen, 1950*

## Facts About Whooping Cranes...



- Tallest North American bird, reaches height of 5 feet.
- Wingspan of 7-8 feet.
- Solid white except for red patch on head and black wing tips only visible during flight or when wings are spread.
- Cinnamon brown when immature, takes on a mottled appearance as white feathers begin to emerge.
- Live approximately 20-30 years in the wild.
- Omnivorous—diet includes insects, snails, frogs, fish, rodents, small birds, berries, blue crabs and crawfish.
- Form life-long, monogamous pairs, though they will re-pair after the death of a mate.

If you are lucky enough to encounter whooping cranes please observe them at a distance and do not approach them. Also please contact us to report your sighting. Thank you.

For more information about the return of whooping cranes to Louisiana, please visit the department's website at:

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wildlife/whooping-cranes>

## LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES



## WHOOPING CRANES RETURN TO LOUISIANA-IT'S SOMETHING TO DANCE ABOUT



## The Past... Louisiana Was Once Home

Historically, whooping cranes occurred in Louisiana in both a resident, non-migratory flock as well as migratory birds that wintered in the state.

Conversion of prairies to mechanized agriculture and unregulated hunting lead to the decline of this species both nationally and at the state level. By 1945, only 2 cranes remained in Louisiana. In March of 1950, the

lone Louisiana crane referred to as "Mac" was captured at White Lake and transported to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the central Texas coast.

For sixty years

whooping cranes were absent from the Louisiana landscape until their reintroduction at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WLWCA) located in Vermilion Parish in 2011.



- Late 1930's-early 1940's. Last records of wintering whooping cranes on southwest Louisiana's chenier ridges and in brackish and saltwater marshes near the coast.
- May 1939. Biologist John J. Lynch sights 13 whooping cranes north of White Lake. Two of the cranes are "young-of-the-year." This record confirms a resident flock of breeding whooping cranes in Louisiana. This is the last record of the species breeding in the wild in the United States prior to experimental and captive-raised whooping cranes hatching chicks in the wild.
- August 1940. Hurricane and flooding from associated rainfall scatters the resident White Lake whooping cranes. Only 6 cranes return.
- 1941-1945. White Lake whooping crane flock loses 1 bird each year...only 2 cranes remain in 1945.
- 1947. Only 1 whooping crane remains at White Lake.
- March 1950. John J. Lynch and others capture the lone White Lake crane and relocate her to Aransas NWR, TX.

Based on Louisiana whooping crane chronology compiled by  
Dr. Gay Gomez, McNeese State University

## The Present...Returning Home

Starting in February 2011, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) reintroduced whooping cranes back into the state at the WLWCA.



The goal of the Louisiana project is to establish a self-sustaining whooping crane population on and around WLWCA. A self-sustaining population is defined as a flock with 130 individuals and 30 nesting pairs that survive for 10 years without any additional restocking. Whooping cranes that are returned to Louisiana will be a non-migratory population. This means the birds will be residents of Louisiana year-round.

The Louisiana whooping crane population is designated as a Non-Essential Experimental Population (NEP). This designation is made possible by provisions contained within section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act, as amended. This designation protects this whooping crane population as appropriate to conserve the population, while still allowing the presence of the cranes to be compatible with routine human activities in the reintroduction area. Despite being an NEP species, it is illegal to shoot whooping cranes. Whooping cranes are protected under applicable state laws for non-game species and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which protects all birds that migrate such as herons, egrets, and songbirds.

## History of Whooping Cranes In Louisiana

- 1890's. Records indicate "large numbers" of both whooping cranes and sandhill cranes on wet prairies year-round; whooping cranes also used coastal locations in winter.
- 1918. 12 whooping cranes shot north of Sweet Lake. Last official record of whooping cranes on the Louisiana prairies.

